

# First records of Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*

## Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* in Kenya: the first record in sub-Saharan Africa

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La première observation du Chevalier grivelé *Actitis macularia* en Afrique sub-saharienne est documentée. Il s'agissait d'un adulte en plumage nuptial, noté les 4–5 septembre 1999 au Mountain Lodge, près de Nyeri, au centre du Kenya. Cette donnée a été acceptée par le Comité d'Homologation Est Africain. Les observations antérieures en Afrique et dans les îles du nord-est de l'Atlantique sont brièvement examinées.

An adult Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* in summer plumage was found on the pool in front of Mountain Lodge, near Nyeri, central Kenya, on 4–5 September 1999. The shallow, marshy pool is within a clearing at the edge of montane forest on the lower slopes of Mt Kenya. The bird was identified on the basis of a combination of its close structural resemblance to Common Sandpiper *A. hypoleucos*, with a shorter tail, large prominent underparts spotting, yellow legs and orange-yellow base to the upper and lower mandibles. It actively probed at the edges of the pool, and occasionally flew when flushed by Cape Buffalo *Syncerus caffer* or Waterbuck *Kobus ellipsiprymnus*. It roosted with three Green Sandpiper *Tringa ocbropus* on an island in the centre of the pool. Fourteen members of an East African Ornithological Safaris tour also observed the bird on 4 September and confirmed the identification. Photographs were obtained and the East African Ornithological Society Rarities Committee has accepted the record.

*A. macularia* breeds from the northern border of the boreal forest zone across North America, south to the central USA, and winters from the southern USA to northern Chile, Argentina and Uruguay<sup>1</sup>. It is a relatively frequent transatlantic vagrant to western Europe, the Azores, Madeira, the Canaries and north-west Africa<sup>2</sup>. In the UK there are now over 120 records<sup>6</sup>. Within the Western Palearctic, the species has been recorded east to Turkey. In addition, one was photographed on São Vicente, Cape Verde Islands, on 24 February–2 March 1999<sup>3</sup>, the first record for the archipelago if accepted. But the Kenyan record is the first documented occurrence in sub-Saharan Africa; subsequently one was present and photographed at Batoke, in Cameroon, on 12–22 April 2000 (*Bull. ABC*

7: 144). In light of its relatively frequent occurrence in western Europe, it appears probable that this individual was originally blown across the north Atlantic during its southerly migration and then continued south. This phenomenon may explain southern African records of Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* and Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa baemastica*<sup>4–5</sup>.

There are only three previous records of Nearctic shorebirds in Kenya<sup>7</sup>: two of *C. melanotos* and one of Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*. Nearctic waders are scarce in sub-Saharan Africa, with *C. melanotos* being the most frequently reported, mirroring its status in western Europe<sup>8</sup>. That the first record of *A. macularia* for sub-Saharan Africa comes from East, rather than West or southern, Africa suggests that Nearctic waders are under-recorded in the continent.

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Figures 1–2. Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*, Mountain Lodge, near Nyeri, central Kenya, 4–5 September 1999 (Richard & Anne Bishop)



Figures 3–4. Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*, Batoke, north of Limbe, South-West Province, Cameroon, 21 April 2000 (Marc Languy)